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LETTER DATED 18 FEBRUARY 1998 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF SOUTH AFRICA TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

I have the honour to inform you of my Government's initial response to developments regarding the interception by Angolan authorities of a private South African company-owned aircraft that violated Security Council sanctions imposed against the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA).

On 20 January 1998, a DC-4 aircraft, which originated at Lanseria, South Africa, departed, according to the flight plan, for the Democratic Republic of the Congo. However, after refuelling at Maun, in Botswana, the aircraft proceeded to Angola. It landed at Jamba and was en route to Andulo when it was forced down by Angolan authorities at Menongue in Cuando Cubango Province. After having landed, the eight crew members were arrested. It is clear that a false flight plan had been filed before the departure of the aircraft from Lanseria.

On 22 January 1998, my Government condemned this serious breach of the mandatory decision of the Security Council relating to Angola and undertook to take vigorous steps to ensure that the sanctions against UNITA were strictly observed.

Following the adoption of the Security Council resolution on Angola, my Government informed all the relevant national and provincial government departments, including the Airline Pilots Association, of the measures contained therein.

Previously, South Africa, together with other Southern African Development Community (SADC) countries, had issued a warning through the SADC Interstate Defence and Security Committee that it would take drastic action against individuals and companies still providing war materials and logistics to UNITA. My Government is firmly committed to enforcing such action.

My Government has also increased its surveillance at those airports from which flights to Angola may depart and is in the process of closing certain

airports in order to ensure the control and security of all flights originating from South Africa.

The events surrounding the illegal entry into Angolan airspace of the DC-4 aircraft and its eight-member crew are currently being thoroughly investigated by the relevant authorities and further information will be transmitted to the Security Council in due course.

I should be grateful if this initial response could be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Khiphusizi J. JELE
Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
Permanent Representative